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IN THE CLAIMS

1-22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently amended) A method of forming a vehicle design index, comprising:

gathering, by a computer, from a plurality of computerized tools, information on elements of a vehicle, wherein the gathering includes retrieving from at least one of the computerized tools information on fewer than all the elements of the vehicle described by the tool; and

storing the information in the index,

wherein a company designing the vehicle comprises at least one group of workers that are restricted from viewing at least some information relating to the vehicle and wherein gathering the information comprises gathering only information which is not restricted from viewing by substantially any of the workers of the company.

24. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering location information of the elements.

25. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering interconnection information of the elements.

26. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering references to documents describing the elements.

27. (Cancelled)

28. (Currently amended) A method according to claim ~~23~~27, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering from tools which carry information restricted from viewing by at least one group of workers within the company designing the vehicle.

29. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein storing the information comprises storing the information in a database.

30. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information

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comprises gathering information on elements of an aircraft.

31. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering the information periodically.

32. (Currently Amended) A method of providing information between workers designing a vehicle, comprising:

providing a plurality of different types of computerized tools, suitable for performing specific design tasks of the vehicle;

~~selecting fewer than all the physical elements of the vehicle to serve as major elements that represent the vehicle;~~

gathering, for each of a plurality of the major elements of the vehicle, information regarding the element, including an indication of the relative assembly of the element and a reference to a worker in charge of the element;

storing the gathered information in a database having a records only for each of the plurality major of elements, wherein the database does not include sufficient information for at least some of the design tasks of the vehicle performed using the computerized tools; and

searching the database for information on one or more of the major elements.

33. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering references to documents related to the major elements.

34. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein the indication of the relative assembly of the element comprises at least one indication of the location of the element.

35. (Original) A method according to claim 34, wherein the at least one indication of the location of the element comprises an indication of the coordinates of the element within the vehicle.

36. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 34, wherein the at least one indication of the location of the element comprises an indication of an access door to the element within the vehicle.

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37. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 34, wherein the at least one indication of the location of the element comprises an indication of a compartment in which the element is located.

38. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 32, wherein the indication of the relative assembly of the element comprises a list of ~~the major elements~~ with which the element is connected.

39. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein the indication of the relative assembly of the element comprises an indication of a system to which the element belongs.

40. (Original) A method according to claim 39, wherein the indication of the system to which the element belongs comprises an indication of a relative function of the element within the system.

41. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 72, comprising running a verification routine which finds design faults, on the data contained within the database.

42. (Original) A method according to claim 41, wherein running the verification routine comprises running a routine which checks for elements which are distanced from each other less than a minimal allowed distance.

43. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein the database does not include diagrams or drawings.

44. (Cancelled)

45. (Currently amended) A method of labeling major elements of an aircraft, comprising:
selecting substantially all the elements of the vehicle that are handled by a plurality of personnel from different departments, to serve as major elements that represent the vehicle;
determining for each major element a system to which the element belongs; and
assigning each of the major elements with a code which is unique to each occurrence of the element in the aircraft, responsive to the system to which the element belongs.

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46. (Original) A method according to claim 45, wherein the major elements include elements belonging to the structure of the aircraft.

47. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 45, wherein assigning the code comprises assigning a code having at least three digits in common with digits of a part number of the element, for at least most of the major elements of the aircraft.

48. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 45, wherein assigning the code comprises assigning a plurality of codes to at least one single element.

49. (Original) A method according to claim 48, wherein the plurality of codes assigned to the at least one single element comprise codes which represent connection ends of the element.

50. (Currently amended) A method of referencing workers working on an aircraft, comprising:

- assigning configuration management codes to various aspects of the aircraft;
- assigning each part of the aircraft, a part number code which includes the assigned configuration management code of the aspect to which the part belongs; and
- assigning worker codes which include the configuration management code of the aspect on which the worker works in designing the aircraft.

51. (Original) A method according to claim 50, wherein the configuration management codes comprise three digits.

52. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 50, comprising preparing a responsibility matrix which references workers by the assigned worker codes.

53. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering a plurality of different indications of the relative assembly of the element.

54. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering the

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information comprises gathering at least three levels of a hierarchy of systems and sub-systems to which the major elements belong.

55. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering for each of a plurality of elements~~selecting the major elements~~ comprises gathering~~selecting~~ only for elements which are handled by personnel from a plurality of different departments.

56. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 32, wherein the indication of the relative assembly comprises an indication in each record of ~~the major~~ elements which are functionally related to the element described by the record.

57. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein storing the gathered information in the database comprises storing in a database having a total storage space of less than 1Gbyte.

58. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 57, wherein storing the gathered information in the database comprises storing in a database having a total storage space of less than 100Mbytes.

59. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering for each of a plurality of elements~~selecting the major elements~~ comprises selecting~~gathering for fewer~~ less than 10% of the physical elements of the vehicle.

60. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 33, wherein the references to the documents comprise hypertext links.

61. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 33, wherein the references to the documents comprise references to diagrams including the elements.

62. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 33, wherein the references to the documents comprise references to procurement invoices of the elements.

63. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein each of the elements is

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identified in the database by a unique code which is assigned according to a functionality of the element.

64. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering from at least one computerized tool such that an update of information in the at least one computerized tool automatically updates the database.

65. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 64, wherein changing the content of the index is allowed only through the gathering from the computerized tools.

66. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 32, comprising incorporating output information of at least one data evaluation program into a form of the database.

67. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 66, wherein the at least one data evaluation program comprises a design-to-cost program.

68. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 66, wherein the at least one data evaluation program comprises a design-for-manufacture-and-assembly program.

69. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein storing the information comprises storing on a portable computer.

70. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 32, wherein the database is open for viewing by all workers working on the vehicle, while changes to the database are allowed only to specific workers responsible for changing the database.

71. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 32, comprising using wherein the database ~~is used by~~ workers to view information on systems of the vehicle other than they are responsible for.

72. (currently amended) A method of providing information between workers designing a vehicle, comprising:

selecting ~~less-fewer~~ than 10% of the physical elements of the vehicle to serve as major

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elements of the vehicle;

gathering, for each of the major elements, information regarding the element, including an indication of the relative assembly of the element;

storing the gathered information in a database, having records only for the major elements;

and

searching the database for information on one or more of the major elements.

73. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 72, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering at least three levels of a hierarchy of systems and sub-systems to which the major elements belong.

74. (Currently amended) A method according to claim 72, wherein selecting the major elements comprises selecting ~~fewer~~ less than 1% of the physical elements of the vehicle.

75. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein the index is open for viewing by all workers working on the vehicle, while changes to the index are allowed only to workers responsible for changing the data of the index.

76. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering the information comprises gathering information on both electrical and mechanical elements.

77. (Currently amended) Apparatus for forming a vehicle design index, comprising:

~~an input interface for receiving data from a plurality of computerized tools;~~

a memory for storing the index; and

a computer configured to gather, from a plurality of computerized tools, ~~through the input interface,~~ information on fewer than all the elements of the vehicle described by the tool, such that the gathered information does not include sufficient information for at least some of the design tasks of the vehicle performed using the computerized tools and to store the gathered information in the memory.

78. (Previously presented) An aircraft system, comprising:

An aircraft; and

a database identifying the major elements of the aircraft with codes assigned according to

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the method of claim 45.

79. (New) A method according to claim 23, wherein the index is restricted for viewing only by workers of the company.

80. (New) A method according to claim 23, comprising using the index for communicating between workers designing the vehicle using different computerized tools.

81. (new) A method according to claim 23, wherein gathering only information which is not restricted comprises gathering general information on elements having some details restricted from viewing by the workers of the at least one group.

82. (New) A method of designing a vehicle, comprising:

providing computerized tools suitable for performing respective design tasks of the vehicle;

designing the vehicle by workers using the computerized tools;

generating a database including information on the relationship between elements of the vehicle, but including information on fewer than all the elements of the vehicle;

contemplating, by one of the workers, to change an element of the vehicle;

determining from the database which elements are directly affected by the contemplated change; and

contacting workers in charge of the elements determined to be affected by the change, to discuss the contemplated change.

83. (New) A method according to claim 82, wherein generating the database comprises generating a database including less than 10% of the elements.

84. (New) A method according to claim 82, wherein generating the database comprises generating a database not including sufficient information to allow performing all design tasks of the vehicle.

85. (New) A method according to claim 82, wherein contacting workers in charge of the elements comprises determining the identities of the contacted workers, from the database.